

2020 climate vision: Common sense

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Body

It's been almost three decades since delegates from 172 countries, meeting at the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, adopted the Convention on Climate Change. U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data show that since then the Earth's temperature has risen an average of 0.03 degrees Celsius per year. At that rate, the planet will warm 2.4 degrees by 2100. That's a sizable amount over 80 years but it's certainly not the "climate emergency" needed to galvanize people into making life-altering sacrifices like giving up cars or air travel or switching to "eco-friendly" food.

The answer to every climate activist's prayer came in the form of 16-year-old Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg. Her transformation to the world's pre-eminent climate-change warrior began with Fridays spent demonstrating outside the Swedish Parliament and gaining the attention of financially capable fellow warriors. Her carefully choreographed journey to New York by "zero-carbon" sailboat was timed to coincide with the UN Climate Action Summit, where she passionately delivered an apocalyptic "How dare you!" tirade heard around the world.

Here in Canada her performance inspired radicalized groups including Extinction Rebellion, which enraged drivers by blocking roads and bridges. A oneday climate strike shut down classes across the country as students joined climate emergency rallies. In a scant few days, Greta struck existential climate-change fear into teenagers everywhere. Unfortunately, her words struck terror into pre-teens. In one elementary class, a child yelled out, "I don't wanna die." Another went home and said, "Mommy, they say that we're going to die in eight years." Traumatizing young children by telling them the world is about to end crosses the line from eco-activism to emotional eco-terrorism.

After New York, Greta journeyed to Alberta where she held an anti-oilsands rally, a puzzling choice given that Canada produces just 1.6 per cent of global emissions, with the oilsands contributing just a tenth of that. Why didn't she travel to China or India, whose emissions make Canada's just a rounding error? While she was in Edmonton, the ever-determined reporters at Rebel Media asked her that question. Her answer? She "hadn't been invited."

No doubt that's true, but her disparaging visit to Canada's oilsands is yet another illustration of activists' fixation on Western countries even though virtually all emissions growth is in the East.

China, India, South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines and Japan, all signatories to the Paris climate accord, are in various stages of constructing a total of 1,800 coal-fired power plants. If Canada disappeared from the face of the Earth, those new plants would replace our emissions in a few short months.

There's little doubt Greta's visit also impacted the outcome of the federal election. Massive media coverage of her climate emergency message increased support for Trudeau's national carbon tax, a task made easier by Andrew

Scheer's failure to clearly explain why the Conservative environmental policy would more effectively reduce global emissions.

That shouldn't have been difficult. Virtually all experts agree the carbon tax would have to be several times higher than planned to have any perceptible impact on global emissions. By contrast, the cornerstone of the Conservative environmental platform was recognition that Canadian natural gas exports could help halve poor-country emissions by switching their power plants from coal to natural gas. The industry hoped the government would push recognition of that reality at the recent Madrid climate conference but was, once again, disappointed.

Canada's preoccupation with national rather than global emissions leads to myriad "local action" absurdities. The award for most ludicrous goes to Victoria City Council for its plan to spend \$14 million installing shore power so cruise ships can shut off their generators while moored at city docks. Council clearly doesn't understand that emissions caused by actually propelling the ships after they leave port are hundreds of times greater than their generators produce.

More tragic than ludicrous is the systematic destruction of one of the world's most technically advanced and ethically responsible oil industries. Though hundreds of thousands of trained workers have been rendered jobless and in many cases hopeless as capital investment and corporate headquarters have fled to the U.S., world oil consumption is six million barrels a day higher than it was in 2010, while the International Energy Agency forecasts demand will keep rising for at least two decades. Yet the Trudeau Liberals' progressive evisceration of our oil industry has handed that growing market to such human rights champions as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Nigeria and Algeria. Adding insult to injury, Quebec, consistent with its "distinct society" status, favours its own interests over those of the country at large and continues to import oil from those countries in preference to Alberta's "dirty oil." But it happily accepts this year's equalization grant of \$13.1 billion, funded disproportionately by Alberta taxpayers.

No other country has so deliberately turned itself into a climate-change martyr. And yet for all the economic, social and national unity pain inflicted, our sacrifices will have no perceptible impact on global climate change. Entering the third decade of this troubled millennium, we can only hope our federal government realizes the future of our confederation requires trading blind ideology for basic common sense.

Gwyn Morgan is the retired founding CEO of Encana Corp. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2020 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Graphic

Amber Bracken, Reuters Files; Greta Thunberg speaks at a climate strike at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton in October.;

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Person: GRETA THUNBERG (79%)

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